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RECORDS

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Kofi ANNAN
(Phonetic: ANen)

GHANA

Secretary General, UN (since 1997)

Addressed as: Mr. Secretary General

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I'm here to do a job, and self is not involved, because we're dealing with much bigger issues, much more is at stake. To put my own ego or my own reputation at the center of it, I think, would be unconscionable and would be a mistake.

Kofi Annan, December 1998

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© *(1996)*

Confident and proactive, Kofi Annan has helped boost the prestige and influence of the UN since becoming its first black African Secretary General. Annan's sophisticated representation of the UN to the public has increased international support for the organization's activities. His efforts to stave off war with Iraq and to win extradition of the Pan Am 103 bombing suspects—although severely criticized in some quarters—has led to renewed calls for UN intervention in other difficult or longstanding disputes, such as the Middle East peace process. He played an instrumental role in setting up the October 2000 Middle East peace summit in Egypt, for example. Annan also has stripped much of the fat from the organization by cutting personnel and streamlining the UN Secretariat. In addition, Annan has lit a fire under the organization's lethargic bureaucracy by bringing in dynamic new personalities from both the government and the private sector to fill key leadership positions.

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Annan has articulately advocated the UN's humanitarian and internationalist ideals by pressing for new programs to educate the world's poor and ease Third World debt. His public advocacy efforts are largely responsible for the renewed emphasis being given to Africa at the UN. In trying to increase the UN's relevance, however, Annan also has become one of the most provocative leaders the organization has known.

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Idealistic World View

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Born in Ghana and educated in the United States and Europe, Annan is the first Secretary General to be elected from the ranks of the UN. He is the product of the very globalization process in which he wants the UN to play a bigger regulatory role for the benefit of all mankind. Well known for his gentle personality, nonconfrontational manner, and idealistic world view, Annan nonetheless makes quick judgments and prefers to deal with problems head on. Most member states hold him in high regard despite his proactive leadership style and the controversial stances he has taken on issues such as humanitarian intervention. Annan to a large extent shares US views about how the UN should deal with the challenges facing the world, but he worries about US unilateralism.

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More General Than Secretary

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Annan's controversial stance on a variety of issues and his proactive leadership style have made him a lightning rod for criticism from developed and developing countries alike but appear to have done little to tarnish his image or dilute his influence. In late 1999, for example, he

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Career Highlights

1963	Began UN career, WHO, Geneva.
1965-71	Administrative officer, then chief of personnel section, Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa.
1974-76	Left UN and managed government-owned Ghana Tourist Development Company.
1976-80	Returned to UN as deputy chief of staff services, Office of Personnel Services.
1980-84	Deputy director of administration directorate, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva.
1984-86	Director of the budget, UN Office of Financial Services.
1986-90	Assistant secretary general for human resources management.
1990-92	UN comptroller and director, Office of Program, Planning, Budget, and Finance.
1992-93	Assistant secretary general, Office of Peacekeeping Operations.
1993-96	Director, Department for Peacekeeping Operations.

released two reports, well received in much of the developing world, that castigated the UN and the world's major powers for failing to stop the Serb atrocities at Srebrenica in 1995 and the genocide in Rwanda the previous year. Many commentators, however, considered Annan's criticism of member states—particularly the West, which provides the bulk of the organization's funding—to be troublesome and outside the scope of his authority.

On the other hand, Annan infuriated many developing countries and drew criticism from Russia and China in September 1999, when he brushed aside the notion that national borders are inviolable and argued that the world has the right to intervene when leaders abuse their people. (b)(3)
Many Nonaligned Movement and G-77 countries considered Annan's call for humanitarian intervention an effort to appease the United States in order to secure his reelection bid, according to sensitive reporting. They are critical of Annan for following Washington's lead too often, particularly in view of continuing US arrears.

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Undecided on Second Term (b)(3)

Annan is (b)(1)
interested in serving a second term when his (b)(3)
current term expires at the end of 2001. The outcome of US efforts to reform the scale of assessments and Annan's perception of the new Administration's attitude toward the UN, however, will influence his decision.

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The international backlash from a continued US refusal to pay its dues might spur Annan to criticize Washington more and could make his job more difficult by impairing the Security Council's ability to achieve the consensus on critical issues necessary to give Annan clear and executable mandates. Nonetheless, potential rivals will hesitate to challenge him, absent clear opposition to a second Annan term among the Council's permanent members. (b)(3)

Personal Notes (U)

Annan was born a twin on 8 April 1938 near Kumasi, Ghana. He has studied at the University of Science and Technology in Ghana (1958-59), Macalester College in Minnesota (1959-61), the International Institute of Higher Studies in Switzerland (1961-62), and the Sloan School of Management at MIT (1971-72). Annan speaks excellent English, French, and several African languages, including Twi and Fante. His first marriage to a Nigerian ended in divorce. In 1984, Annan married Nane Lagergren, a Swedish national, who is the niece of Raoul Wallenberg. The couple has three adult children from previous marriages. (b)(3)

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